

The women abused by the doctors they trusted: Having sex with patients is now the most common reason for doctors being struck off. And the victims' emotional scars can last for ever

- **Michele Mauger had an affair with her doctor that ruined her marriage**
- **Jill Tudor said her doctor 'preyed on my vulnerability'**
- **Sheila Rorie is haunted by the humiliation of giving evidence to GMC**
- **New guidelines have been published on doctors/patient relations**

BY Beth Hale

When Michele Mauger turned up to her first appointment with the psychiatrist she hoped might help to turn her life around, there is no doubt she was in a highly vulnerable state.

Michele, then 38, was suffering from depression after she developed a thyroid condition and had a botched hysterectomy the previous year.

Married with two children, Michele hoped that meeting Dr Steven Lomax in February 1988 would be the first step towards the recovery she craved.



Psychological scars: Michele Mauger regrets an affair she had with Dr Steven Lomax, right, who has since been struck off

Instead, their encounter was to be the start of a bitterly destructive 13-year relationship between patient and doctor, the effects of which Michele still lives with today.

The affair tore apart her 20-year marriage, disrupted her relationship with her children — Annie, then 20, and Richard, nine — and has left Michele with enduring psychological scars.

'I was in a very vulnerable state and wanted help,' she says. 'What happened destroyed me and my family. It was as if a grenade had been thrown into our lives. It was horrendous.'

Michele is telling her story after the General Medical Council, which regulates doctors, published new guidance on relationships between doctors and their patients and former patients.

In 2009, improper relationships with patients overtook clinical issues as the most common allegations leading doctors to be struck off the medical register — and experts say the number of cases brought to the GMC's attention each year may be just the tip of the iceberg.

Only this week yet another case of a woman claiming to have been exploited by her doctor reached the GMC's Manchester tribunal. The details of the case are, for women like Michele, depressingly familiar.

Humiliated: Sheila Rorie admits she was also in the wrong when she had an affair with her doctor but he abused his position

The 39-year-old, a mother-of-one who has not been named, claims that Dr Jonathan Beacon, 66, an orthopedic surgeon, waived his fees for treatment to her injured knee before beginning a torrid affair with her.

The two met in 2005 when she attended his surgery in St Albans. They then allegedly embarked upon a 19-month long affair that only ended when the woman met another man, to whom she is now married. Dr Beacon has not commented on the case nor attended the hearing, which is ongoing. Whatever the outcome of the case, it is clear that a doctor-patient relationship that becomes too close can have far-reaching and deeply painful consequences.

'I was like a rabbit caught in blinding headlights. I was excited by being so very special to a person such as him'

Michele Mauger's case also reached the GMC, two years ago — and 23 years after she first met Dr Steven Lomax in a consulting room at Castel Hospital in Guernsey.

Lomax was struck off the medical register after details the affair were revealed. But the tragedy didn't end there for the Mauger family.

Two months after the hearing in October 2011, Michele's 32-year-old son killed himself. Michele is tortured by the impact her relationship with Lomax had on her vulnerable son, who was being treated for schizophrenia.

'I know it was his illness,' she says. 'But Lomax coming into to our lives and destroying our family was the catalyst.' Michele moved from Guernsey to Eastbourne in East Sussex to rebuild her life following the affair.

She looks back with bitter regret on the relationship she had with Lomax, who was married with three children.

'I was like a rabbit caught in blinding headlights,' she says. 'I was excited by being so very special to a person such as him.'

Almost from the start, she says, Lomax was intimate in his conversations with her. They would discuss their love of art, poetry and music — subjects far removed from Michele's pressing medical issues.

She had been referred to Lomax by her GP for psychotherapy to treat her depression. 'I felt it was a bit strange,' she admits. 'You don't expect that intimate level of conversation from a doctor. He paid me lots of attention and that's very seductive when you're vulnerable,' Michele says.

Their relationship quickly evolved into something way beyond doctor and patient. Lomax commented on the 'sexual tension' between them, and before long he was driving Michele home and kissing her. Soon it was a full-blown affair.

'Afterwards I felt dirty. I felt like the worst, most disgusting person in the whole world,' Michele says. Nevertheless, the relationship flourished, medical consultations became romantic trysts, and when Lomax confessed to his wife that he was having an affair, Michele also told her husband.

'It was terrible,' she says. 'He was heartbroken, and the children didn't know what was going on.' Michele moved out of the family home, leaving her son Richard in the care of his father. Her daughter Annie was away at university by then.

Years of turmoil ensued in what became an on-again, off-again relationship. Michele, who divorced her first husband in 1996, followed Lomax from Guernsey to the British mainland when he moved jobs.

'But it was never right,' she says ruefully. 'I spent more than 13 years being picked up and dropped.' The relationship finally collapsed in January 2001, after Lomax said he had fallen out of love and wanted to be alone.

Embarrassed: Jill Tudor believes her GP 'preyed on my vulnerability'

Michele packed her bags and left their Lancashire home with just two suitcases of belongings to show for what she regards as 13 wasted years.

She set up home in Eastbourne, where she began work as a medical administrator. Michele says: 'At the time I thought Lomax loved me and I thought I loved him.'

'My daughter says I didn't love him, I just needed him. I don't even know what love is any more.'

Troubling as Michele's experience is, it is sadly not a one-off. The Medical Defence Union says it deals with about 70 cases a year where doctors are said to have overstepped professional boundaries.

'We both did it, it was wrong, but yes, I do think it was more wrong in that he was my doctor'

Jonathan Coe, managing director of the Clinic for Boundaries Studies, a charity supporting victims of abuse by healthcare workers and which trains doctors in ethics, says: 'People get in touch with us every week. It is clear that the levels of reporting to the regulators are an under-representation.'

'There is often a lot of shame and guilt, with patients feeling that because they have not stopped something happening, they have assented to it and feel a certain responsibility.'

Grandmother Sheila Rorie, 63, is haunted by the humiliation of giving evidence to the GMC.

She was married when she began an affair with her GP, Michael Rusling, then 48. Rusling was struck off in 2009 after admitting the affair, as well as a second relationship with a colleague.

His relationship with Sheila, who had undergone a hysterectomy after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, began when she went to the GP's Hull surgery in 2006 because she feared the cancer was back.

It wasn't — but during a medical examination, Rusling slipped his hand inside his patient's underwear before kissing her.

Sheila, who had suffered abuse in her traumatic childhood and was feeling lonely during a 'bad patch' in her marriage, didn't try to stop him. 'We talked. It wasn't all sex,' she says. 'He was a nice person, a kind person.'

Despite the similarities with Michele's experience, Sheila has far more mixed feelings about her affair.

'I can't really condemn him, can I?' she asks. 'We both did it, it was wrong, but yes, I do think it was more wrong in that he was my doctor. He knew my faults, he knew my problems.'

The couple had a seven-month sexual affair in September 2006 which only ended when Rusling was suspended after a second patient made a complaint to the police.

Responding to scandals: The GMC have published new guidelines on doctors/patient relations (posed by models)

Sheila subsequently tried to rebuild her relationship with her husband, but they separated this year. Sheila says she knows she carries some responsibility for what happened.

'It's not a case of "poor little me",' she says. 'But I do think he had a professional duty and he should not have crossed that boundary.'

This sentiment is shared by Jill Tudor, 51, a mother-of-four who resorted to secretly taping her sex sessions with married GP Dr Simon Robinson to escape their tangled relationship.

Robinson was struck off a year ago after a disciplinary panel said he lied by claiming Jill's account of a 16-month affair was a malicious fantasy.

Jill, who had surgery to remove a brain tumour in 2004, became a patient of Robinson's at Cae Glas Surgery in Oswestry, Shropshire, after moving to the town in 1999.

Jill ended up confiding in the doctor about the break-up of her marriage. 'I thought he was a good doctor and a good listener,' she says. 'Some doctors can make you feel like you're not on the same level, but he was quite down to earth.'

Jill says the relationship changed when she went to see her GP for a check-up in July 2009. She'd had a long bout of depression and was being treated for alcoholism.

'As I got up to leave, he stood up, came towards the door and said: "As it's your birthday tomorrow . . ." and kissed me on the mouth.'

Another kiss followed, and Jill says she left the surgery 'on cloud nine'. A week later, Robinson arrived unannounced at Jill's home and asked her to perform a sex act.

She told the GMC that for the rest of the year, the doctor would call at her home or ask her to the surgery two to three times a week. She would perform a sex act on him, but they never had full intercourse.

Wrong medicine

The number of complaints to the General Medical Council about doctors rose by a quarter from 2010 to 2012

'My life centred on whether he would call,' she says. 'When it first started, I thought it was a relationship, even though I would ask him why he never made love to me. He always said that would be crossing the line; it always came back to the fact he was my doctor. It was crossing the line to have sex, but not crossing the line to do what he was doing. It sounds bizarre now, but it made me feel special,' she says.

'There was something flattering about the fact that he was a doctor. But as time passed, I started to see it differently. It made me feel cheap, and dirty.'

'He preyed on my vulnerability. I think I needed loving, but not like that.' By the end of 2010, Jill was at her lowest ebb and told her grown-up sons what was happening.

On their advice, she recorded two of her encounters with the doctor. These were subsequently played to a GMC hearing after Jill made an official complaint.

Robinson disputed her claims, insisting she had fabricated the story. 'I had to put up with being painted as a fantasist,' she says. 'But the worst part was hearing the recording. It was very embarrassing.'

Jill has been shunned by some neighbours who blame her for the loss of a popular doctor. Robinson, who was struck off, has maintained that he is innocent.

As far as Michele Mauger is concerned, there can never be an appropriate relationship between a doctor and a patient. 'If you meet in a bar or at a party and see someone you like, it's on an equal level,' she says. 'But with a doctor, the patient is in a vulnerable position. The balance of power is never equal.'

'Everyone who goes to a health professional is vulnerable, whether emotionally, physically or mentally. You have to trust that professional to deal with what's wrong with you.' Michele says her trust was abused, and the impact of that is enduring.

'If you give that trust to someone and they turn it to their advantage, it messes with your head,' she says.